

1943 Edition of the Baltimore Elite Giants

Like every other athletic organization, war and its disastrous effect on sports has hurt the Baltimore Elite Giants to some extent. Four of the team's key players of the pre-war days are now serving in the armed services, while a half-dozen others, more or less important to the outfit, have been lost to war-time employment, key men in the industrial machinery that is just as important as the soldiers themselves.

The quartet in the service, all in the army, are Jonas Gaines, crack southpaw pitcher, who paced the Elites to the Negro National League championship in 1939; Sammy Hughes, Veteran infielder, whose flashy play around second base long has been tops in the circuit; Bill Barnes, dependable pitcher; and Johnny Washington, firstbaseman, whose departure created a genuine setback to the club's infield. Hughes was reported in the South Pacific recently, while Gaines and Washington were still in continental United States.

The Elites, formerly the Nashville Elite Giants, nonetheless, have a formidable aggregation and are still carrying on in the true tradition of Elite Giant clubs--battling at the top for the league championship and never giving up hope. Last year, the Elites went down to the last day of the loop season in a neck-and-neck do-or-die battle with the Champion Washington Homestead Grays before accepting runner-up honors in the league race.

Many veterans of that fighting combination are still with the club and instilling the pennant fever in the handful of newcomers who have taken the departing players' places. The club is a potential winner at all times and packed with

talented performers who rank among the league's best. Improvement is steady among the rookies on the club and Manager, George Scales is highly optimistic about the club's chances of finishing the second half race in the No. 1 spot.

Scales, a veteran of more than two decades in league baseball, knows all the answers to the diamond sport. He managed a pennant-winning club in Puerto Rico last Winter and returned to take over the reins of the Elites, replacing Felton Snow, who is a prospective draftee.

Scales was beset with infield worries at the outset of the season as Tom Butts, shortstop, and Roy Campanella, catcher, are playing in Mexico this season. Undaunted, however, the cagey pilot experimented here and there and today has fashioned an infield that is helping the Elites win games and looms as good as any in the circuit. Scales, himself, is holding down third base, a post which was second-nature to him in his younger days. Big George's big bat, long his best friend, still pokes the long hits. Against the Champion Grays early this season, he banged out two homers in a perfect day at bat as the Elites took a double-header from Josh Gibson and company.

With Scales at third, Snow, former thirdbaseman, has been shifted to shortstop. A rookie from Nashville, Tenn., home of Rom Wilson, Pres. of N. N. L., is handling second base. He is Harvey Russell, 21-year-old youngster, who bids fair to develop into one of the league's outstanding infielders.

At first base is a converted pitcher, Bud Barbee. Barbee, 6 feet, 2 inches and nearly 200 pounds, is a perfect target for the infielders' throws, and swings a mighty war club. His hitting, incidentally, is a forte and he is batting from

the clean-up post.

In the outfield, the Elites are fortified with one of the league's best in Henry Kimbro, who roams center. Kimbro, a stocky, quiet player, who makes his capable work look easy, is without question the best defensive centerfielder in the NNL.

Bill Hoskins, once a power swatter and still a clouter of note, plays leftfield while a rookie, James Jones of Annapolis, Md., works in rightfield. Occasionally, when the need for greater batting power is paramount Scales sends one of his heavy-hitting pitchers, Bill Harvey or Bill Byrd, to replace Jones in right.

With Campanella away, the full burden of the catching has fallen on the shoulders of Robert (Kike) Clark, but Clark has proved that his shoulders are broad and is doing a swell job. Clark, a veteran of 15 years experience, knows pitchers and is the perfect man for clutch work and development of the younger members of the Elite mound staff. Assisting him with the receiving are Frazier (Cic) Robinson, and Frank Mahell, both formerly with the Edgewater Giants and Baltimore Grays.

The pitching staff is loaded with three of the league's most dependable, hefty Bill Byrd, who stands six feet and throws righthanded, and the two crack southpaws, Bill Harvey and Tom Glover. All three have turned in several three and two-hit games this season, and are the mainstays in Scales' hope for a second half victory.

The trio is supported by Andy Porter, who returned from a season in Mexico, and William (Bill) Burns, a capable right-hander, who once played with the Newark Eagles and the New York Black Yankees.